

Aberdeen PMC Establishes New Inter-Center Strain Trials
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In early November, 1994 the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center planted new inter-center strain trials at Coffee Point, Idaho and Grantsville, Utah. The PMC had also planned to plant a trial at the T-6 Ranch near Winnemucca, Nevada but unfortunately, due to travel budget constraints, it is on hold until travel money can be obtained.

The purpose of these inter-center strain trials is to: 1) determine range of adaptability of new accessions compared with released cultivars, 2) establishment, production, and growth habits, and, 3) document performance of accessions for possible future release.

Coffee Point, Idaho is located about 25 miles northwest of the PMC in southeastern Idaho and first used as a test site as early as 1965. The active test area is a 10 acre enclosure on BLM land. There is a large display nursery, and test plots of bluebunch wheatgrass, fourwing saltbush, and winterfat, planted in the early '80s. In the fall of 1987, we planted additional test plots of grasses, a new display nursery and green stripping plots. This site has received no more than 5-6 inches annual precipitation since 1987 and most of the seed did not even germinate following the 1987 seeding.

Grantsville, Utah is located in north central Utah about 30 miles west of Salt Lake City in a 9 - 12 inch precipitation zone and is owned by the Grantsville Conservation District. This site was chosen for its sandy soils and heavy cheatgrass cover and was first seeded in the fall of 1988. This site suffered from drought and grasshoppers and was considered a failure shortly after its establishment.

In a change from past plantings, we have narrowed the list of species to test at these tough climatic sites. Test plots with accessions of bottlebrush squirreltail, crested wheatgrass, Siberian wheatgrass, thickspike wheatgrass, basin wildrye, Russian wildrye, and Columbia needlegrass were planted at both sites. Since extensive testing of winterfat and fourwing saltbush has taken place at Coffee Point in the past, accessions of these species are not included there. However, we intend to plant fourwing and winterfat accessions for testing purposes at Grantsville early this spring. Both sites have a display nursery to allow cooperators to view plant material included in the test plots.

The preparation and planting of these sites takes a lot of time and people-power. Without the help of field office employees Roy Fowler and Lindle Offenbacher at Coffee Point and Willy Conrad and Clarke Garn at Grantsville, it would have been much more difficult for the PMC staff to accomplish these plantings. Thanks guys!

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